PROVIDING SECURE BUS OPERATIONS

Safety recommendations for the commercial vehicle operator.

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Since September 11, 2001, security is on everyone's mind and has become a most important priority. For transit, motorcoach, school bus, and other types of commercial vehicle operators, this new priority presents many challenges. Nevertheless, this challenge must be met.

In considering bus operations, one must begin to plan for security response at three levels:

- Attacks upon the equipment to cripple our ability to transport people;
- Attacks upon equipment and passengers;
- The use of equipment, with or without passengers, to attack larger targets such as national monuments, transportation infrastructure, etc.

In order to develop a security program to combat such efforts, a systematic approach to developing procedures, implementing technology, and hiring and training the appropriate people become important centered around two critical organizational points:

- Who handles, touches, or has access to a motorcoach during any 24 hour period;
- How is a motorcoach used and what are the current procedures for its movement from one point to many other points during the course of a day?

What makes this process so difficult is that many of us are not oriented toward thinking and do not want to think as a terrorist. Nevertheless, a far reaching and comprehensive program for security centered around the two above principle points and incorporating as much as we can the thinking of twisted and hateful minds is necessary. The following checklist is an initial attempt to develop systematic thinking toward effective security programs for all bus operations.

In order to begin, a brief description of bus movement is as follows:

- Sits at rest in the company yard;
- Moves into the maintenance area for work;
- Moves into the bus wash area for cleaning;
- Sits in the company yard;
- Moves onto the street and from point to point based upon predefined schedules or itineraries;
- Returns to the yard and sits or is parked and put at rest at a remote location during the course of an extended trip or itinerary;

- Inspection by Commercial Vehicle Inspectors at undefined and undetermined locations.

The people who would most likely operate or interact with the bus during the course of a bus day are:

- The driver;
- Mechanic;
- Bus washers;
- Passengers;
- Commercial Vehicle Inspectors.

The first most basic element in defining an effective security program is to identify bus locations or activities during the course of a typical day or, if you have more than one type of typical day, during the course of multiple typical days and to define those people who will interact with that bus on a daily basis. If you do not do this, significant leaks and gaps in your security plan can exist.

Based upon the above bus activities and people interacting with buses, the following is a list for security program development:

1. The Bus

    a. Minimize/remove and keep to a minimum any interior compartments for storage or access to bus systems. This does not include overhead bins, but compartments for access into the front structure of the bus, compartments in the restroom for plumbing, etc. must be eliminated as much as possible. This is vitally important in the restroom area. No compartments or access areas should be in the restroom. The only openings should be in the toilet and the sink. Nothing below the sink or within the walls of the restroom should provide any hiding places.

    b. Video cameras with a 48 hour video life should be considered for video taping all passengers as they enter and leave the bus. These cameras should not be known or visibly seen by anyone.

    c. Fire extinguishers should have a unique and definable marking, whether it is on the casing or an additional tag, to insure the driver or any other person inspecting it that it is a bonafide and usable fire extinguisher. By providing an identifiable mark, such extinguishers can not be replaced with similar looking encasements which may contain explosive materials.

d. All necessary compartments which remain on the interior of the bus should be locked and sealed.

e. All compartments on the exterior of the bus (engine, luggage, batteries, etc.)should be equipped with a tamper proof lock and electronic means of surveillance to determine if these locks have been opened while the bus was in a secure shut down mode.

f. Each bus should have an engine kill switch which is operable not only from the driver's compartment but from a remote location. This will require electronic operation and cell or satellite communication.

g. Each bus should have a silent communication/emergency capability.

h. Buses should have vehicle location systems (cell/satellite locators) to know a bus' actual location at any time from dispatch or some other centralized location.

i. Restrooms should be equipped with sensors to alert drivers if anyone is tampering with toilets, sinks, etc.

j. Signs and warnings prohibiting guns, knives, scissors, etc. should be posted at the entry of the bus.

2. Drivers, Mechanics, Bus Washers, Etc.

a. Must have a United States driver's license for at least three years.

b. Should not have multiple addresses.

c. Must provide five personal references. These references must be contacted for verification of personal identity and as an expanded personal reference check. All five references can not be immigrants or citizens of a foreign country.

d. Use security wands for screening of luggage at remote points to identify the presence of large metal objects and to determine their relative safety during transport. Alternatively, train drivers and require drivers to check all luggage before it is put into the luggage compartment. Inform all drivers that a policy of the company is to inspect all luggage before it is brought on board. Make sure drivers know what to look for and how to identify it.

Note: The above qualification standards and procedures are in conjunction with those procedures already in place.

3. Procedures and Training

a. Any time an interior compartment is accessed by a mechanic or any other

employee, another employee must inspect the interior compartment, reseal it, and sign off. Documentation should be required to show the employee who accessed the compartment and the employee who inspected and resealed.

b. Regular inspections of fire extinguishers with initials or sign offs by those who inspected them should be documented and records kept at the company's facility. These records should be kept for at least five years.

c. Pre-trip inspections must be enhanced. They also must be done thoroughly on a daily basis by all drivers. Thorough inspections looking underneath the bus for suspicious items attached to the structure is important. A thorough inspection of each compartment with the bus in a shut down and secure inspection mode must be done. Each compartment must be relocked or sealed.

d. A means of inspecting the roof of the bus during pre-trip inspections is important. If alternative fuels (LNG, CNG) is employed, this is even more important.

e. Call-in procedures must be enhanced to insure control of the vehicle by the driver and vehicle location. On a regular time basis (such as two hours) every driver must call in and confirm their exact location and operating conditions. During this call-in, any suspicious activities, passengers, etc. should be noted. This protocol should be in place and never violated. If a driver misses a scheduled call-in, dispatchers must attempt to communicate with the driver and, if that fails, communicate with police to confirm bus location and operations.

f. Develop a communication protocol for any emergency response related to suspicious passengers or hijack/terrorist situations. Make sure all people involved in the communication process are trained and prepared for deployment of the process if and when necessary.

g. Listing of all passengers on charter/tours should be required. These lists should be kept for at least five years. Positive photo identification should be required at the beginning of each charter/tour.

h. Listing of passengers on line runs should be acquired at the terminal or at stops along route. This listing should employ the use of positive photo ID identification, after which terminal employees or drivers will list on a daily passenger manifest the name of each passenger and their boarding location. These lists should be kept for five years.

i. Training should be provided to all drivers concerning management of hostile passengers. This training should emphasize appropriate communication techniques and appropriate emergency action protocols that should be employed by drivers under hijacking/terrorist situations (and for less urgent passenger management situations).

j. If such lists are available, drivers should have watch lists of the names of suspected subversives or terrorists to compare to passenger lists. Appropriate communication protocols should be in place and provided to drivers if they suspect that a passenger or passengers boarding the bus is wanted or is on a watch list. This would require that drivers carry cell phones on their persons while outside of the bus to make discrete communication with dispatch or other appropriate agencies as necessary.

k. The availability of on-board weapons for driver response might be considered. However, this is an extremely volatile item which requires much more consideration before it is implemented. While it must be considered, it is not advocated for use at this time.

l. Develop a "once in - once out" protocol for luggage stored in the luggage compartments during the course of a day.

m. When a driver retires a bus at the end of the day, the bus must be in a secure/alert status so that if any compartments are tampered with, it will be known upon inspection by the next driver or employee. These systems should be capable of communication from remote locations such as central dispatch so that the monitoring of this security can be done spontaneously, randomly, and from a remote point to maximize security insurances.

n. When vehicles are not stored overnight at company facilities, vehicles should be parked in well-lit areas. They should not be parked alone in unsecured areas. Visibility and activity associated with numbers of vehicles is an important security factor.

4. Facilities

a. LNG/CNG fueling locations must be kept completely secure. Documentation of entry must be used, defining who, when, and for how long anyone entered the fuel storage location.

b. Post in all terminals or other locations where passengers purchase tickets and wait to board that all guns, knives, scissors, etc. are prohibited from being on board, and that such weapons or items must be announced in advance, even for storage in luggage which will be in the luggage compartment.

c. At terminals, luggage should be checked, either with the use of scanning machines, individual wand devices, or by hand.

d. Employ bomb sniffing animals for luggage and passenger checks at terminals and other passenger collection points.

5. Government Considerations

   a. Buses owned and operated by companies who are properly registered with USDOT and state agencies could be monitored if security protocols are required by law. The most difficult scenarios within which to gather intelligence are for operators of individual units or for operators of units who do not intend to use them for commercial purposes. It is suggested that for these specific situations, the government do the following:

      i. The purchase of any bus from a manufacturer must be documented and registered with the USDOT and state within which the unit is to be delivered. This documentation should include the serial number of the unit, date of delivery, and purchaser.

      ii. Within 90 days, the US government and the state to which the vehicle was delivered should have an automatic inquiry into the registration of this vehicle for commercial purposes. If the vehicle has not been registered for use, appropriate investigation should occur to understand the status and operation of the unit.

      iii. Any bus purchased through any used vehicle dealer should also be documented and sent to the appropriate state within which purchase occurred and within which deliver will be made and to the US Department of Transportation. Again, vehicle registration, dates of sale and delivery, and purchaser should be known. This should be done even if the vehicle is purchased with express intention for private use (e.g. a bus purchased as a motor home). Within 90 days, appropriate follow up should be conducted by state agencies to insure that the vehicle has been registered. Any additional intelligence follow up regarding the purchaser or operation of the vehicle should be done by appropriate federal and state agencies.

   b. A standard procedure for USDOT and/or state agencies should be to conduct a full compliance audit within 90 days of new motor carrier registrations should be established. This review not only could enhance general safety operations, but could incorporate an enhanced security check and balance procedure to understand the legitimacy of these operations.

The above listings are not assumed to be complete. I am sure that these listing will be added to or modified over time.

What these listings intend to do is make you think about developing security processes as part of your everyday business operation. Add, delete, modify the above lists. But most importantly, think about security and implement procedures, install technologies, and inform all employees about security programs for your company and customers.

Keep in mind that some technologies should be deployed without fanfare. Cameras video taping passengers boarding and departing should not be readily seen. Drivers should not be able to override such systems.

Each type of bus transportation may have different possibilities/ or potential for terrorist attack. Transit buses seem most likely for use in attacking urban areas. Motorcoaches could be used to launch a widespread attack across the country at any point in time. School buses might be used to emotionally paralyze our country because of students onboard while attacking targets. We must guard against such events from happening with our buses. We must make every best effort to prevent hijacking from occurring on or with our buses.

People who perpetrate such acts do not have twisted minds; they have twisted hearts and souls. If courage is death they have much of it since they are so willing to die. But if courage is to lead people in changing their ways of life, especially as it relates to their fellow man, terrorists always fail. Our challenge is not to be fearful but to lead. Our challenge is to show the courage to change within our industry and to protect and defend those who are dear to us - our family, employees, customers, and even our country.

Somehow, we must find ways to do this without increasing our costs so dramatically that we drive ourselves out of business, or limiting ourselves in finding capable employees, etc.

Our compassion is not our weakness; it is our strength. We have the hearts and the souls to respond to those that are empty. All we must do is out think them. While that is a daunting challenge, there is no doubt in my mind that we can do it.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to guarantee the elimination of the use of a bus or a truck for terrorist acts. Nevertheless, through a comprehensive, well defined, and consistently deployed strategy, the commercial motor vehicle industry, including the government, manufacturers, operators, and other relevant organizations can limit this potential and maximize security for employees, customers, and the general public.